

Happy New Year



**Best Wishes
for**

2011

Pop singer Bobby Farrell dies on tour in Russia



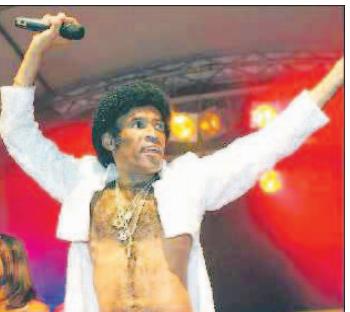
AMSTERDAM – Performer Bobby Farrell, of the 1970s European chart-topping group Boney M, was found dead in his hotel bed Thursday while on tour in Russia, his agent said. He was 61.

Farrell appeared as scheduled in St. Petersburg Wednesday night, but complained of breathing problems before and after his show, said the agent, John Seine. He had been due to fly to Rome Thursday for a television show.

Farrell, who lived in Amsterdam, was more a

dancer and showman than singer when he fronted Boney M in the 1970s and '80s. The group, based in Germany, broke into the charts with "Daddy Cool" and "Sunny" in 1976. Two years later their version of "By the Rivers of Babylon" sold nearly 2 million records in Britain alone, keeping it No. 1 for five weeks.

Alphonso "Bobby" Farrell left his home on the Caribbean island of Aruba at 15 to work as a sailor, then drifted to Norway and Germany



Bobby Farrell, singer and dancer with 1970's disco group Boney M, performs during a tv show in Huerth near Cologne, western Germany, in 2009. Farrell, a seventies disco icon, has died aged 61 in a Russian hotel room while on tour, his agent and investigators said.

to pursue a career as a DJ, according to his official biography.

He was chosen in 1974 to front the Caribbean group Boney M, put together by German singer and songwriter Frank Farian, who did much of the recorded singing. Boney M had 38 top-10 hits, including 15 number ones in Germany.

They included "Brown Girl in the Ring" and "Mary's Boychild."

In 1978 Boney M was the first Western music group invited by a Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, to perform in the Soviet Union. A Soviet military plane flew the performers from London to Moscow, where they sang for an audience of 2,700 Russians in Red Square. The original group of Farrell and three women broke up in 1986 and

Farrell continued on his own or with various female back-up singers, maintaining his flamboyant style and glittering costumes. In recent years he toured under the name Bobby Farrell's Boney M, melding disco and Calypso music. Seine said the cause of death was not known, but Farrell had suffered health problems off-and-on for 10 years. He said he was found dead by hotel staff after he failed to respond to a wake-up call. □



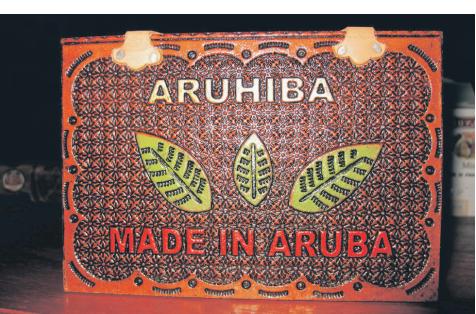
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ORANJESTAD- Benjamin Petrocchi started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced cigars called "Aruhiba". These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrocchi has always

had an interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crop. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The process took ten years. Petrocchi dedication to the cigars is important for the molding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. The cigar box is specially designed for the cigars with the logo "Aruhiba". Petrocchi considers Aruhiba a promotion for Aruba through fine quality cigars. The company sells International cigars as well. Buy a gift box of Aruhiba Corona with five

cigars and you will get 1 FREE cigar of \$35. Located at the Historic Dutch Windmill. Open from Monday to Saturday from 9am till 8:30pm. And open on Sunday from 9am to 1pm. At the Tamarijn Hotel open on Monday till Saturday 12pm to 8pm. And on Sunday from 9am to 1pm. Aruhiba is only available in above mentioned stores. Visit our authentic tobacco farm where cigars are handmade.



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Palynological Study Shows

Aruba was Greener and Quite Wet 400 Years Ago



ORANJESTAD - Aruba was greener and definitely much more humid 400 years ago, before the arrival of the first European. That is the conclusion of Biologist Kees Nooren, who completed a palynological study here on behalf of the Aruba national park, Arikok. Palynology is the study of pollen, grains and spores, as well as other organic microfossils. Nooren conducted his investigation in the park, but particularly at the Spanish Lagoon area where he extracted fossilized spores and pollen from the ground, taking him back thousands of years.

The pollen and spores he collected were later analyzed at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands and showed that Aruba's vegetation was different as compared to how it is now, and

similar to what can be found in Puerto Rico and the Windward Islands. For instance, there were a total of seven different species of ferns growing here, including a fern tree. The study took two years and was financed by the Prins Bernhard Fund, and illustrates the vegetation history of Aruba. According to the results, Aruba's vegetation was able to flourish without human intervention until some 6,500 years ago. That is when the study first showed human presence near the Spanish Lagoon and at other sites. That was also when the first fruit plant was introduced to the Aruba. However, the impact of humans was minimal.

Some 1,000 years ago, the island was lush, with enough rain to support a growing population. But things changed upon the

arrival of Europeans, first the Spaniards, then the Dutch. With lack of minerals, the only valuable resource on the island was wood of the trees. A drastic deforestation took place on Aruba and according to biologist Nooren, this had an impact on the soil and eventually on the rainfall. The erosion of soil made it difficult for the vegetation to restore quickly. Even though no similar studies were conducted in the region, it can be assumed that similar activities took place in the nearby islands and the northern coast of South America, and thus also impacted the weather pattern.

Regeneration was also hampered by the aloe industry that took root in particularly the 19th century. Most of the fields were cleared for aloe plantations and thus, trees did not have the opportunity to regenerate.

But the news is not all bad. Nooren showed pictures of the area surrounding the Spanish Lagoon of some 100 years ago. The hills were relatively barren without tall growth. Nowadays, comparative photos show that the mangroves in the lagoon itself are more abundant, while the area, including the Frenchmen's Pass has large, overgrown trees. Nooren attributes this to the diminished importance of aloe for the island's economy and thus open fields were able to regenerate. The vegetation consists now of secondary, fast growing plants and trees, particularly the thorny acacia tree, Hubada.

Kees Nooren believes this is a good thing, as these 'scavengers' will help contribute to soil generation which eventually will enable local plants, who are under the threat of extinction, to regenerate. In fact, Nooren points out the existence of young saplings, indicating the success of the survival of some of the endemic trees.

The national park considers the study of high importance in light

of its reforestation project. The results of the study make it clear what directions to take, and how the process should take place to ensure success. Arikok National Park spokesperson Jimmy Mijer says there are also plans to reintroduce the Aruba parrot in the wild, but before that happens, "we have to make sure the animal will be able to find its food in the wild." And the reforestation

project will contribute to that. The next step is to safeguard Spanish Lagoon. The wetland area is of utmost value for the ecosystem on Aruba and has yet to enjoy legal protection here, even though it resorts under the Ramsar Wetland Treaty. The intention is for the Spanish Lagoon to resort under management of Parke Nacional Arikok. □



*Special
Of the Month!*

Appetizer

- Fish Soup
- Onion Soup
- Conch Fritters
- Escargot
- Salad

Entrée

- Fresh Catch of the Day prepared by our local chef just the way you like it.
- Jumbo Shrimp from our local waters, breaded served with potato or rice or with garlic tossed over linguine.
- Filet Mignon* 8 oz. US Tenderloin
- Grilled Boneless Chicken Breast

Dessert

- Chocolate or Banana Cake
- Ice Cream
- Coffee / Tea

3-course dinner
\$24.95
per person

This special cannot be used with any other promotions, vouchers or certificates.

* A surcharge of \$2 will be added.

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Driftwood
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Andrew Curiel opens new doors for Aruba Trading



ORANEJESTAD — Andrew Curiel started with makeup at just 16 years old and after many years of hard work, he is considered one the top makeup artists on the island for both local and international clients.

In 2010, Andrew joined the team with the Aruba Trading Retail Store as the In-house Fashion Manager and Beauty Expert.

Aruba Trading Retail Store is held at the highest regard in reputation with and impeccable history and known for offering high quality products from around the world including perfumes and cosmetics for both women and men. Together with Andrew, Aruba Trading has created a new era of professional service and personalization. □



WISHING YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR

The Airport Branch
will be closed on the
following dates:

Friday, December 31, 2010:
Closed at 11:00 AM

Saturday, January 1, 2011:
Closed

**Starting on January 2, 2011:
The Airport Branch will no
longer be open on Sundays.**

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MooMba upgrades Sunday Breakfast Buffet



HADICURARI - Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It wakes you up, gets you going and keeps you going for a long time as it gives you energy. Skipping breakfast is not a good idea, especially not if you want to lose some weight. So make breakfast into a feast and enjoy it to the hilt. At MooMba Beach, located between the Holiday Inn Resort and the Marriott Ocean Club, breakfast is always superb: it is a buffet-style event with an omelet and egg station, toast, bagels and buns, there are cereals

and yoghurt, pancakes, waffles, bacon, ham, cheese and a great selection of fruits. Of course there is coffee and tea as well as juice and all of the above can be put on your plate as often as you like.

Breakfast at MooMba is special: not only is the view on the ocean breathtaking, the atmosphere in the al fresco restaurant is totally relaxed. No worries, no hassles, just enjoy. The price of the breakfast buffet includes coffee and tea; with unlimited juices and is available from 8 – 11 am. □

Happy Holidays from Aruba to You



Enjoy your holidays on the island of Aruba with lots of fun activities rain or shine. Pictured are the crew members of the Jolly Pirates sending you holiday wishes.

Ring in the New Year in Style at the...

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Sunset Grille

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A La Carte Menu
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Reservation required

Includes party favors and a midnight Champagne toast at Mira Solo Lounge

Laguna Restaurant

A fun festive family restaurant
New Year's Eve Seafood & Steak Buffet, \$29.95 p.p.
5:30 pm to 10:00 pm
Reservation suggested

New Year's Dinner & Dance

A memorable beach side party under the stars

8:00 pm to 1:00 am
Seating around the pool or on the beach

Appetizer

Antipasto Salad

Entrée

Trio platter: Tenderloin, Seabass & Lobster Tail

Dessert

Viennese Dessert Table with Fancy Pastries and Cakes

\$ 150 per adult • \$ 85 for teens 12 to 17 • \$ 55 for kids 5 to 12
No charge for kids under 5

Adults will receive \$40 in non-redeemable casino match play coupons

Followed by a dance party with Ernesto & Hildward, Aruba's HOTTEST band and live DJ mixing, till 1:00 pm

Includes Super Premium open bar, party favors and a midnight champagne toast with firework

New Year's Eve Dance

A memorable beach side party under the stars

Includes Super Premium open bar from 10:00 pm to 1:00 am
Viennese Dessert Table with Fancy Pastries and Cakes

Party favors and a midnight champagne toast with firework

\$ 60 per adult • \$21.45 for teens 12 to 17 • Kids under 12 free

Adults will receive \$20 in non-redeemable casino match play coupons

All prices subject to 15% service charge & sales tax.

For reservations call telephone: 526.6613 and 526.6613 or e-mail: LagunaRestaurant@radissonaruba.com

All major credit cards accepted

Aruba to become more 'chic' in 2011



ORANJESTAD - IMG Fashion and the Aruba Tourism Authority, along with its partner the Aruba Fashion Group, announced recently a three year partnership for IMG to consult on the creation and execution of Aruba in Style – a yearly fashion, entertainment and lifestyle event to take place on the island of Aruba beginning in the Fall of 2011.

"Aruba already offers some of the best designer retail offerings in the Caribbean, and we feel strongly that this new partnership with IMG and the launch of the Aruba in Style event will help to elevate the island's reputation as a Mecca for fashion and style," said Mr. Otmar Oduber, Aruba's Minister of Tourism, Transportation and Labor

Affairs. "One of our top goals in increasing tourism to Aruba is to bring more high-profile events to the island, such as Aruba in Style, which will generate increased awareness of Aruba as a chic and sophisticated vacation destination."

Aruba in Style will be a mix of fashion shows, parties, presentations and shopping at one of the Caribbean's most exciting destinations. Taking place in various locations around the island, the event will bring together designers, celebrities, models, fashionable consumers and the media to experience in-season resort, ready to wear and bridal collections in distinct, intimate parties as well as over the top extravaganzas. Activities

will include unique in store shopping experiences, open to the public events and exclusive invitation-only soirees.

Aruba hosts one of the region's best retail mixes along with unique destination hotels and resorts and, of course, some of the best beaches in the Caribbean. Its unique topography, fantastic restaurants and friendly, diverse population add to its charm and sophistication. "On behalf of Aruba Fashion Group we are excited to be working together with IMG and our principal sponsor, the Government of Aruba and the Aruba Tourism Authority," said Damilice Mansur, Principal of the Aruba Fashion Group along with Ronchi de Cuba and Evelin Weaver. "We are sure we will build, with these partners, what will become the most fashionable event in the region highlighting Aruba as the leading fashion and entertainment destination in the Caribbean."

IMG, a leader in the management, production and creation of global fashion platforms, will bring its expertise in establishing an events global presence as well as industry and designer contacts to the event. "This is a tremendous opportunity



for us," said Peter Levy, SVP and Managing Director, IMG Fashion Worldwide. "We have often looked towards this region as a place where a strong, global fashion event could take place and were lucky enough to find creative thinkers in the Aruba Tourism Authority and Aruba

Fashion Group who shared our vision for something both sophisticated, cool, and distinctly Aruban."

Details on the event, including participating designers, models and celebrities, will be announced in the coming year. □

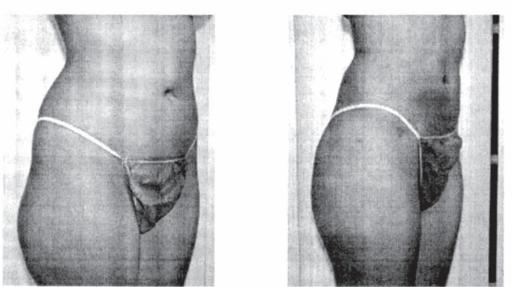


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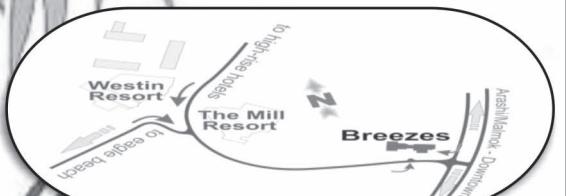
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Conveniently located past the Old Dutch Mill on the corner of Sasaki Highway.

Look for the 2-story building

Reservation recommended at Tel : 586-1115

Don't miss our WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY ENTERTAINMENT FROM 6:00PM - 8:00PM

10% Discount on F&B

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Final preparations for this weekend's gala performance at Occidental Grand

New Year Dance Gala this Sat & Sun



PALM BEACH - The final rehearsals for the upcoming performances the New Year Dance Gala featuring vignettes from "The Nutcracker" and Stravinsky's "Firebird" performed by Kozlov Dance International have had Occidental Grand employees distracted for the last two days.

Leonid Kozlov, former principal dancer of the Bolshoi and New York City Ballet,

with his wife, prima ballerina Adriana, yesterday afternoon welcomed guest performer Albert Davydov, a star with the New Jersey Ballet, who will play the Nutcracker/Prince in the beloved holiday ballet.

Davydov, who began his ballet training when he was eleven years old with the Kazan Choreographic School in Russia, launched his U.S. career while touring with the



Tatar State Theater of Opera and Ballet in the Europe and the Americas; he was offered positions by a number of U.S. dance companies and in 2004 joined the N.J. Ballet. He was and selected to perform with Whitney Jensen of the Boston Ballet in the famous Varna annual festival. Leonid last year celebrated his 30th anniversary of his defection to the west.

He has staged "The Nutcracker" and "Firebird" in theaters around the world; his sumptuous costumes and sets were created by the most sought after Russian designers.

There will be two performances in the ballroom of the Occidental Grand Resort; Saturday, January 1 at 9:00 PM and a Sunday matinee on January 2 beginning at 4:00 PM.

Tickets are on sale for \$20 U.S (35 Arubian florins) and may be purchased at the concierges' desk at the Occidental Hotel or at the Van Dorp Bookstores (Caya Milio Croes, Holiday Inn, Divi Resort). Groups can also order tickets by calling on Aruba, 593-6362. Tickets can be purchased at the door; cash or travlers' checks, credit cards are not accepted. □



American Home Assurance 2011 Calendar

A tribute to the Beautiful Birds Of Aruba



PALM BEACH - It is the 10th year that American Home Assurance Company has worked on a calendar based on the popular Aruban themes. The very popular ones so far were the 'Money of Aruba', '50 years of Carnival in Aruba', 'Flora y Fauna di Aruba' and 'Nos Pais'. For the year 2009 & 2010, the theme of our Calendar was 'Imagine Aruba'. On popular demand, the Company has decided to repeat this theme for the year 2011.

Our Company would like to thank Mr. Gregory M. Peterson for his collection of photos that he is sharing for this purpose. Greg has founded a foundation called Aruba Birdlife Conservation in May 2010 to contribute to our island's urgent wildlife conservation needs. The calendar is thus dedicated to ecology and preservation of wildlife. Mr. Prakash Gupta, Managing Director of the company would like to thank Greg Peterson for dedicating quite some time

towards perfection of the text and pictures and also Prographics, the Company's Printers for a timely print out of the calendars. American Home Assurance has decided to donate one thousand calendars extra to the Aruba

Birdlife Conservation and these calendars can be purchased by contacting them at.

Accompanying photos show the launch of calendar at the ballroom of Westin Aruba. □



Kimberly Martin Wins a Cool Jackpot



PALM BEACH – Kimberly Martin, a guest of the Riu Palace, enjoyed a bit of gaming between the holidays, resulting in a \$5,000 jackpot. She was playing the IGT

Triple Diamond when the spinning wheels stopped and the bells started ringing. Casino Hostess Jolanda Salas, paid the jackpot and reports Kimberly's eye lit up at the

thought of shopping! The casino, says Jolanda hosts a number of weekly events which attract many locals and visitors, such as Ladies Night, every Wednesday. □

Dinner is always a Genuine Spanish Experience

Casa Tua Barcelona hosts Live music on Fridays



ORANJESTAD - What a surprise!!! This old warehouse transformed into a typical Spanish or Italian town's square, with its gurgling fountain, French lamp post and lime-washed walls features an open Pizza Atelier, under a small country hut, covered with old hand-made roof tiles.

Opened downtown Oranjestad two years ago, the restaurant dishes reflect this inter-cultural relationship of Spanish, French and Italian cuisine, all served in a friendly, casual setting. On the menu, a wide variety of Spanish Tapas, appetizers starting at \$2.95, and plentiful Paellas, made daily, filled with mussels, clams, shrimp, pork

loin and chicken. The menu also boasts famous Pata Negra ham, Chorizo, and other specialty dry-cured pork sausage.

Naturally, the restaurant's whole Grilled Red Snapper, fresh fish fillets and beef tenderloins are all cooked "A la "Plancha," with just a sprinkle of olive oil, representing a healthy Mediterranean lifestyle. Patrons also favor the restaurant irresistible thin-crust pizza, baked according to a secret family recipe, topped with Casa Tua infused spicy olive oil, a signature condiment for Casa Tua restaurants on the Island. You really don't want to miss such an enchanting

**Open from 11:00 am to 10:00 pm Monday to Saturday
5:00 pm to 10:00 pm Sunday**
Located downtown first floor Aventura Mall behind The Renaissance Resort



spectacular show. From the dramatic Spanish instrumental ballads to the catchy warm Flamenco music of the Gypsy Kings, they deliver a night of fun and emotion.... Special food combos are available for lunch weekdays, starting at \$8.95 p/p.

Happy Birthday David Coster



PALM BEACH – A festive birthday celebration for David Coster unfolded at Ruth's Chris steakhouse at the Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino.



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Only Casino in Aruba
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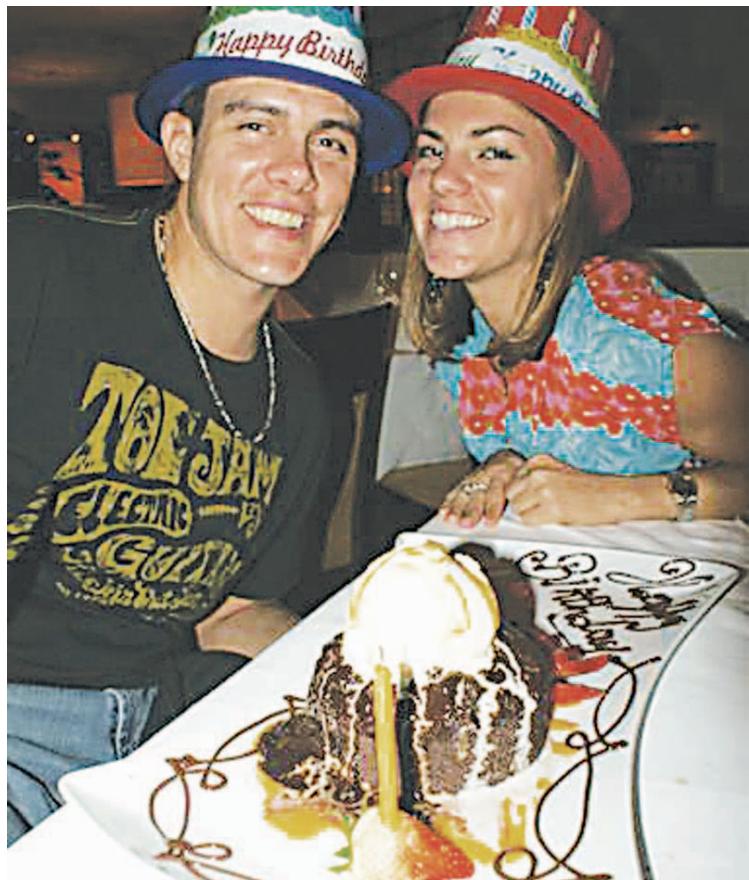
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POKER ROOM Tournaments

Mondays & Tuesdays at 6:30 PM \$10
Wednesdays & Thursdays at 6:30 PM \$25
Fridays at 7:00 PM \$50
Saturdays at 7:00 PM Freeze out \$150
Sundays at 7:00 PM Freeze out \$100

(Tournaments are subject to change as per Management criteria)
Lady Luck is waiting for you at Excelsior Casino!!

David enjoyed the company of his beautiful wife Jenn, best friend Justin Carson aka "Primo", and his mom Rona Coster, over sizzling, delicious prime steaks and cocktails. The restaurant crew lavished their attention on the birthday boy and the birthday party as David recently joined the Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino as the La Vista & Room Service Manager, and appreciated experiencing his own work-place from a patron's point of view. □



Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano

Menu Turistico
3 course dinner

\$19.95 p.p.

Open daily from:
5:30 – 11:00 p.m.

A unique outdoor dining experience in the tropical garden at the poolside terrace. Enjoy tasteful pastas, pizzas and seafood specialties prepared with the freshest ingredients.

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Behind the Alhambra Casino

For reservations call: 582 3444
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Photo Exhibit to launch at Westin Aruba Art Gallery



PALM BEACH - On Saturday January the 8th The Westin Aruba Gallery opens the first solo exhibit of local photographer Annemiek (Miki) van Vliet. Miki is an amateur photographer, who focuses mainly on nature. However, architecture is also a favorite subject. She likes taking on the more scientific and journalistic role of photography as social document, visual record, and tool of communication, but still, very concerned with beauty. She tries capturing the decisive moment, when unexpected visual congruities reveal significant moods and meanings; a moment that is not there the next. She calls herself

a hobbyist with an observant eye who uses photography for factual statement, for persuasion, for entertainment, and for personal expression, or in other words, as a graphic means of depicting the "real" world. With this exhibit she wishes to share some of the world's beauty that some may not have the opportunity to explore.

"If it captured my eye, even in ruined and dilapidated state, I must have seen beauty in it and that is what I want to share in the hope of making others see as well, maybe if it is by slowing down for a minute and really look at it and try to see behind the façade instead of



rushing by in this hurried life we lead." The exhibit is freely accessible every day of the week till February 4, in the Westin Aruba Art Gallery. You are most welcome. □

Come join the fun

*For a Memorable
Island Gaming Experience!*

You Are Invited!



Pre-New Year's No Limit Hold'em Poker Tournament

Date: Thursday, December 30th, 2010
Time: 7:00 pm

New Year's Eve Party

An evening of fun with prizes and surprises, welcome the New Year in style!

Date: Friday, December 31st, 2010
Complimentary Champagne
Toast at Midnight
Live Music

On Going Poker Bad Beat

When it's time to shuffle and deal, we always have a seat for you!

Poker's "Bad Beat" jackpot stands currently on \$7,489

New Year's Day No Limit Hold'em Poker Tournament

Date: Saturday, January 1st, 2011
Time: 7 pm

Weekly Slot Tournament

Date: Saturday, January 1st, 2011
Time: 9:00 pm
Live Music



The Casino at the Radisson
Open daily from 12 noon to 4 am
For information call +297 586 4045

"The Lionfish Cookbook" released

Can't beat'em, then eat'em



MIAMI — Florida marine conservationists have come up with a simple recipe for fighting the invading lionfish that is gobbling up local reef life -- eat them.

The Key Largo-based REEF conservation organization has just released "The Lionfish Cookbook," a collection of 45 recipes which is the group's latest strategy to counter an invasion of the non-native reddish brown-striped fish in Florida waters.

"It's absolutely good eating

-- a delicacy. It's delicately flavored white meat, very buttery," Lad Akins, director of special projects for Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF), told Reuters. He authored the cookbook along with a professional chef, Tricia Ferguson.

Red lionfish, a prickly predator armed with flaring venomous spines like a lion's mane that give them their name, are native to the South Pacific, Indian Ocean and Red Sea.

With few natural predators, they have been rapidly expanding in Caribbean and Atlantic waters, voraciously preying on local fish, shrimp and crab populations across the region and in Florida, which has world-famous coral reefs.

Some scientists are now listing the invasive lionfish species among the top 15 threats to global biodiversity. While REEF has organized local fishing "derbies" to hunt the lionfish, including handling tips and tasting

sessions, Akins said making humans the invading species' top predator was the best way to fight back against the threat it posed. "Fishermen and divers realize it's a danger to our native marine life, through its predation. But there really aren't government funds to provide bounties or removal programs. So creating a demand for the fish, a market for the fish, is in effect a de facto bounty," he told Reuters.

U.S. government researchers believe the red lionfish was introduced into Florida waters during Hurricane Andrew in 1992 when an aquarium broke and at least six fish spilled into Miami's Biscayne Bay.

CARIBBEAN'S NEW DELICACY

The front section of the cookbook, which calls the lionfish "The Caribbean's New Delicacy," gives useful tips on collecting, handling and preparing the colorful species, as well as providing expert background on its ecological impact.

Akins says the fish, which lives among coral, can be netted, speared or caught by rod and reel, but he recommends handling them with puncture-proof gloves

to avoid a painful prick from the mantle of venomous spines.

"They can be quick over a short distance, but they're not a free-swimming ocean fish like a tuna or a mackerel," he said.

Unlike the toxic Fugu pufferfish or blowfish, which is an expensive delicacy in Japan but requires careful expert preparation to avoid potentially fatal poisoning, Akins says lionfish meat is safe to eat and contains no venom.

"The venom is only in the spines. Cooking the fish would denature the venom, even if you left the spines on. It's simple enough just to cut the spines off," he said.

Akins said he hoped the cookbook could help create a commercial market for lionfish that would speed their eradication. But he wasn't sure whether the brightly colored invader would appear on the menus of Miami Beach eateries.

"It certainly is on the menu in many other countries -- the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Dominican Republic, Mexico," he said, adding that orders for the recipe book, which can be purchased online at www.reef.org, were coming in fast. □



Visit our Christmas Show 2010!

Also open on Sundays from
10 AM - 2 PM!

Open from Mon - Sat from 8:30 AM - 6:00 PM • Avenida Milio Croes 101 • Tel. 583-6468



At 1 p.m. in downtown Oranjestad

Renaissance to light up 4.5 million firecrackers today



ORANJESTAD – Today at 1 p.m., the Renaissance Resort will ignite a string of 4.5 million fireworks. The "Pagara", is a long row of firecrackers, tied together on a string and finished with some more firecrackers packed together for extra noisiness.... to ward off any kind of remaining fuku, or evil spirits. The Pagara will be lit in front of the Seaport Cinemas and culminate in front of Luis Vuitton.

This is not a great place for small children to be as the sound is extremely loud with heavy smoke like gun powder. Fireworks (clapchi) are sold all throughout the island. The skies are filled with thousands of fireworks, ranging from small sparklers and firecrack-

ers to magnificent colorful displays accompanied by music, rivaling those of July 4th in the US. All eyes are riveted to the skies. At the stroke of midnight on December 31, this reaches an unbelievable, no-holds-barred crescendo as the roar reverberates through the smoke-laden air and the skies are ablaze with color. The vast majority of houses and businesses will throw a pagara at some point before midnight on January 1st. The longer the pagara, the more powerful it is. Meta Corp., one of the largest employers of the island, and throws the longest pagara on the island. This seems to work, because they keep on growing, business-wise.□



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Paul Allen to Silicon Valley: Your Ideas Are Mine

Website modules that suggest items related to what you're viewing. Pop-ups at the corner of your computer screen that notify you when a friend's status has changed. Widgets that display stock quotes or the weather forecast. You've probably come across many of these staples of digital society already this morning.

According to Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, they're his. The Seattle Times is reporting that the billionaire's now-shuttered technology firm, Interval Licensing, has filed an amended lawsuit against Apple, Google Facebook, eBay, and seven other web and office supply behemoths for patent infringement, after a federal judge in Seattle ruled earlier in December that an initial suit was too vague. The firm is requesting compensation from companies it claims are employing technologies developed by Interval in the 1990s.

Does Interval have a case?

It's a Longshot, says Brier Dudley at The Seattle Times, citing legal experts. But "the potential payoff is large--perhaps \$500 million or more if he wins."

What Are Allen's Motivations? asks Christopher Dawson at ZDNet:

To a billionaire who goes around building music museums, it seems as though there would need to be more at stake than a mere \$500 million to bother going after the likes of Google, Apple, and Staples. This seems like it's more about the future of the Web (including the mobile Web and Microsoft's biggest competitor) than it is about YouTube and iTunes content recommendations.

Some of These Allegations Are Bizarre, points out Peter Sayer at PC World. He notes that Interval accuses the e-mail spam filters offered by AOL and Google of infringement "because their classification of messages as spam depends in part of a comparison with other e-mail messages received."

Google's Android Operating System May Be in Trouble, asserts Florian Mueller at FOSS Patents. The lawsuit, he explains, levels allegations at Google for making and selling devices with the Android OS and associated software like Google Talk and Google Voice. Mueller adds:

Should Google be served an injunction as a result of Interval's suit, owners of Android phones would experience a very significant degradation of the user experience. Android's usability is generally under threat now because Apple already asserts various user interface (particularly multi-touch) patents against HTC and Motorola, and in its latest claims against Motorola, Microsoft also asserted a couple of touchscreen patents. □

Christine O'Donnell FBI Probe:

Witch Hunt or Legitimate?

WASHINGTON, DC — Is Christine O'Donnell a criminal? Now the FBI is investigating the failed Senate candidate for possible misuse of campaign funds, O'Donnell is defending herself by saying the charges have no merit and are part of a nefarious plot against her by her political enemies, including, she suggests, Joe Biden. It sounds crazy, but could she be right?

Slate's Dave Weigel says the case against her is thin. The Delaware GOP had filed an FEC complaint against her just before the September 9 primary but dropped it after she won. Eleven days later, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington filed their own complaints based on accusations by a former staffer that O'Donnell had used campaign funds to pay her own rent and utilities. Advisers told O'Donnell to hold onto campaign funds for possible legal challenges after the election. As of December 2, she had kept \$924,800. Now she's going to need it.

Being Accused Doesn't Make Her Guilty

Slate's Weigel writes, "Most of the allegations against O'Donnell concern campaign spending from her previous campaign account, but an investigation was assumed to be coming as soon as CREW weighed in. This is why [her spokesman] ranted a bit to ABC News about the flimsiness or political motivation of the CREW case. The O'Donnell campaign's explanation for the use of fund was always an eyebrow-raiser, but it's only been a month since CREW's last FEC complaint, against John Ensign, was dismissed. 'Hit by complaint filed by CREW' does not always (or typically) mean 'guilty of violating law.'"

O'Donnell Should Blame Republicans, Not Democrats, conservative blogger Robert Stacy McCain writes. "The FEC usually handles campaign-finance investigations in a quiet manner and it is seldom much of a headline when the FEC imposes a fine. More importantly, nine times out of 10, violations are only really newsworthy when they involve the winner of an election. ... The attempt to inflate this investigation into a big story... via leaks prominently featuring anonymous Delaware Republicans most likely represents the state GOP's desire to drive a stake through O'Donnell's political heart. It's spiteful and pathetic."

The Press Is Eager to Convict, American Spectator's Aaron Goldstein muses. "If O'Donnell is under federal investigation shouldn't the FBI apprise O'Donnell before

they tell the AP? ... If she is under federal investigation she has the constitutional right to face her accusers and call their evidence into question. The onus is on the federal government to prove her guilt. However, as far as the mainstream media goes, O'Donnell has already been tried and convicted."

Not a Crook, Just an Idiot, FireDogLake's TBogg writes. "When it comes to the misuse of campaign funds, I think O'Donnell sincerely believes that the people who gave her money to run for office gave it to her with the understanding that she is doing God's work no matter how long it takes and a rent payment here and an evening of bowling there are just a place to stay and a thing to do during The Perpetual Campaign of Righteousness, for she is the embodiment of the contributors hopes and desires.

They want her to use it as she sees fit. Sure she's making a living off of the yokels much like Sarah Palin does, but she lacks the white trash feral cynicism of a Palin. O'Donnell's no Grifter Grizzly, she's more Blanche Dubois; spiritually pure, lost in a fantasy and depending on the kindness of strangers."

Interesting Conspiracy Theory, Time's Michael Scherer notes. "That's right. She thinks Biden is sending the G-Men after a Republican candidate who has done more to help the Delaware Democratic Party than, well, just about anybody since Biden."

These Investigations Happen to Everyone, Pat Buchanan said on MSNBC, as noted by The Daily Caller's Jeff Poor. "Every campaign I've been in, they've got auditors come walking in afterwards. They go over the books for months and then they say, 'Look at this, look at this, look at this.' You're going to be fined. Even Hillary Clinton got it. ... And if the FBI, quite frankly, and the federal prosecutors are looking into whether this woman paid her rent with campaign funds, then they don't have much to do."

Huge Surprise, Wonkette's Jack Steuf jokes. "Isn't it strange how a person who has earned no income over the past half-decade and yet is not living on the streets could be charged with any kind of financial fraud?"

Same old lamestream FBI bullshit. If you listen to the real FBI, the one made by O'Donnell out of pipe cleaners and dragon blood, she's actually been too good with her finances, and the FBI that's charging her should be the ones thrown in prison." □

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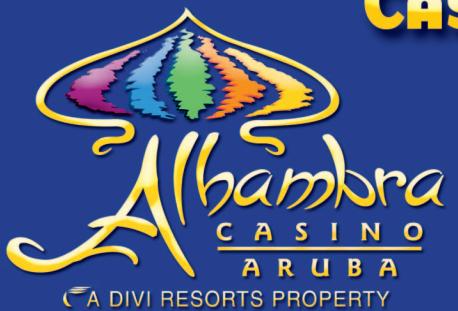
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Coach K wins No. 880

Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski waves to the crowd after Duke's 108-62 win over North Carolina-Greensboro in an NCAA college basketball game in Greensboro, N.C., Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2010. Krzyzewski moved past longtime rival Dean Smith into second place on the men's all-time wins list.

Associated Press

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NFL labor: What's ahead? Perhaps silence

By BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK — As one of the strangest NFL seasons — on and off the field — winds down, football fans can begin contemplating playoff matchups, followed by the Super Bowl, then the draft. And then, perhaps, nothing. Dark stadiums. Empty Sunday afternoons and Monday nights. No fantasy teams.

The collective bargaining agreement between the league and the players expires March 4. Team owners have gone from voicing optimism to basically clamping up about reaching a contract with the players union any time soon. Commissioner Roger Goodell and NFLPA executive director DeMaurice Smith emphasize the need for substantive negotiations now. Yet the two sides remain far apart on the major issues, particularly the players' share of revenues, and a switch to an 18-game regular season.

"If both sides give a little, everyone will get a lot," Goodell says, "especially the fans."

Counts Smith, "The players believe this lockout is going to occur."

They certainly do, say Tom Condon and Ben Dogra, two of the NFL's top player agents, with a clientele that includes the Manning brothers, Drew Brees and Patrick Willis.

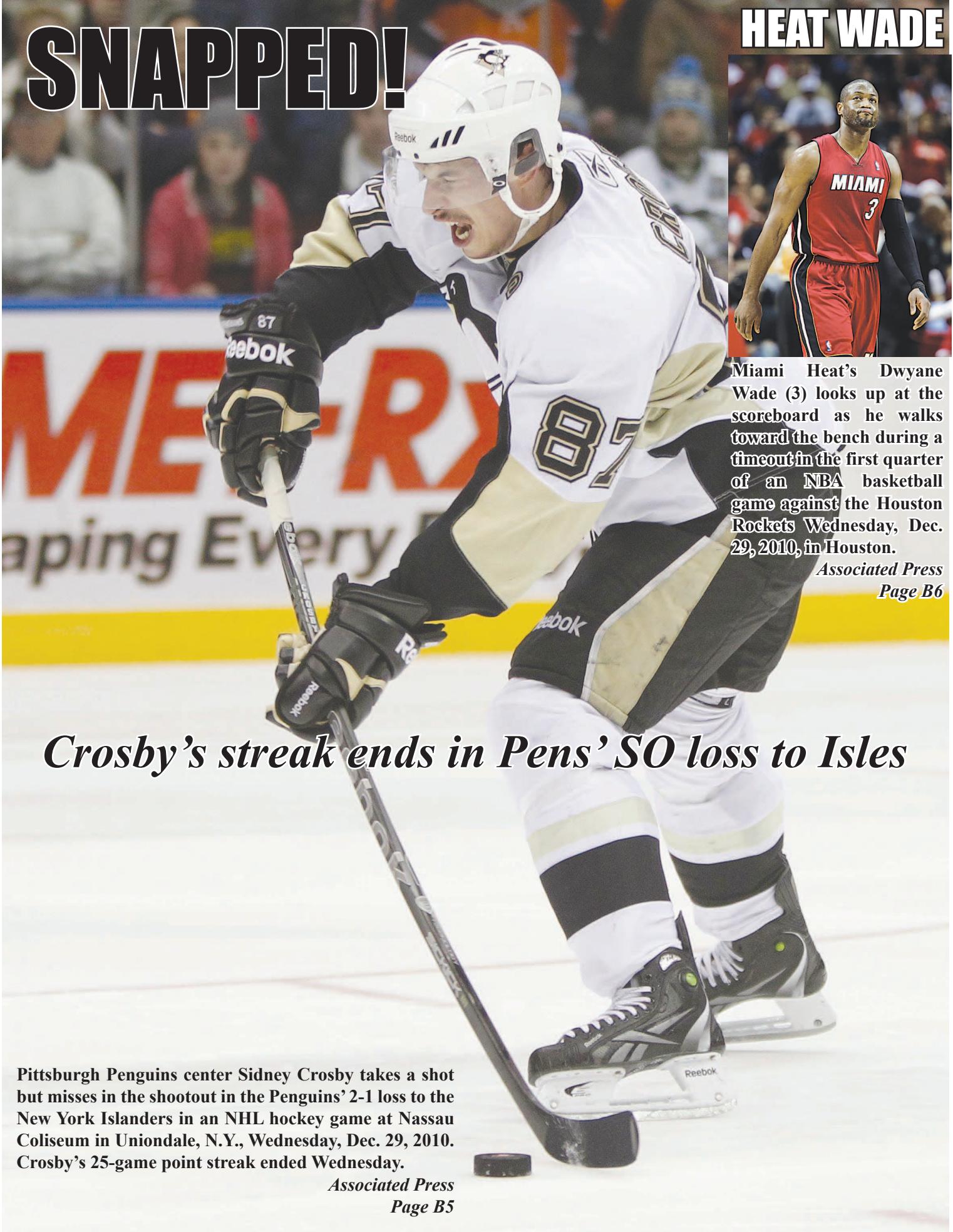
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SPORTS

Aruba TODAY

On Top Of The News E-mail:news@arubatoday.com Website:www.arubatoday.com Friday, December 31, 2010

SNAPPED!



HEAT WADE



Miami Heat's Dwyane Wade (3) looks up at the scoreboard as he walks toward the bench during a timeout in the first quarter of an NBA basketball game against the Houston Rockets Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2010, in Houston.

Associated Press
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Crosby's streak ends in Pens' SO loss to Isles

Pittsburgh Penguins center Sidney Crosby takes a shot but misses in the shootout in the Penguins' 2-1 loss to the New York Islanders in an NHL hockey game at Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, N.Y., Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2010. Crosby's 25-game point streak ended Wednesday.

Associated Press
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Colts' Manning chasing more history against Titans



Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning (18) passes against the Oakland Raiders in the third quarter of an NFL football game in Oakland, Calif., Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010.

Associated Press

By MICHAEL MAROT

AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — Peyton Manning would rather focus on winning games than chasing milestones, and now his teammates and coaches understand why.

Picking a favorite accomplishment is tough stuff — especially on a weekend that he's chasing three NFL records and trying to enter one of the league's most exclusive clubs.

"You're asking me which (one) is the most impressive?" kicker Adam Vinatieri said, laughing. "You're asking me to pick between which car I'd rather have, a Lamborghini or a Ferrari. The answer is yes." It's not just another game for the only four-time MVP in league history. It could be the most historic day of his remarkable career.

When Manning takes his first snap against the Titans, he will break Gene Upshaw's league record for most consecutive regular-season starts to open a career. The two are tied at 207.

That's just the start.

Beating the Titans would send the Colts into the playoffs for a ninth consecutive year, tying the league record Dallas set from 1975-83. If Manning throws for 300 yards, he would have 64 career 300-yard games, one more than Dan Marino's NFL record. And if Manning throws three TD passes, he will join Marino and Brett Favre as the third member of the 400 TD club.

Should one of those TD passes go to his favorite receiver, Reggie Wayne would break a tie with Hall of Famer Raymond Berry for second in

franchise history. Wayne and Berry each have 68.

Not bad for a day's work.

Pro Bowl defensive end Dwight Freeney and receiver Pierre Garcon believe the most notable feat this weekend would be extending the team's streak of playoff appearances. Manning has taken the Colts to the playoffs 10 times in 12 seasons, and only five of his current teammates — right tackle Ryan Diem, running back Dominic Rhodes, center Jeff Saturday, long snapper Justin Snow and Wayne — have ever missed the playoffs. Three of those — Diem, Rhodes and Wayne — were rookies when the Colts stayed home in 2001.

"I think the playoff streak is the most impressive because it's so hard to get there and there are so many variables that can cause you to not get there," Freeney said. "When you have 53 guys on the roster, it becomes a team thing, too, and he's got to get everyone going on the same page."

Coach Jim Caldwell and linebacker Clint Session are more amazed by Manning's

incredible durability.

In 13 NFL seasons, Manning has never missed a start. His streak ranks second only to Favre among NFL quarterbacks and when you count playoff games Manning has started 225 consecutive games.

Caldwell, who has been coaching more than three decades and was Manning's position coach for seven years, understands how challenging it's been for Manning to play every single week.

"Often times people look at the consecutive games played for a quarterback and they look at that like it's supposed to happen that way. But it takes a very, very tough individual to string them together like that," Caldwell said. "That I think is very, very difficult to do. That's quite a feat."

But Manning has a way of making things look routine. It took Marino 17 seasons to throw 420 TDs, a number Manning will likely catch next year — despite playing three fewer seasons — and at least one Colts receiver wouldn't mind be paired with Manning

in the trivia books.

"It would be pretty cool to catch No. 400 and be part of one of the many records he has," Garcon said with a smile. Manning, as usual, isn't thinking about a milestone game day. He'd rather focus on beating the Titans.

"Every single team we've played all season we've concentrated on that team and that team alone and haven't looked at anything else," he said.

And it's not about to end there. Vinatieri, owner of four Super Bowl rings, doesn't see the 34-year-old quarterback slowing down.

"I'd say the most impressive would be making the playoffs nine years in a row — that's IF we make the playoffs, we still have to win," Vinatieri said.

"I think that just shows such consistency and that's just something that without a stud quarterback, you probably don't have the possibility of doing. You know he sets new records every week, and when he's done, he'll probably hold every meaningful passing record." □

NFL LABOPR

Continued from Page B1

"I think the players are taking this very seriously," says Condon, who has been through three other labor disputes: in 1974 as a rookie, in '82 as a part of the negotiations, and as an outside counsel to the players in 1987. "They know what is at stake here and all the reaction to preparing for it has been positive. We have encouraged them to talk to their player reps, who are their direct lines to the union, to discuss the issues, and to discuss the issues among themselves."

Broncos safety Brian Dawkins, a 15-year veteran, says he has advised younger players on saving money. Chiefs linebacker Mike Vrabel, a 14-year veteran and, like Dawkins, a member of the union executive committee, adds that the NFLPA has asked every agent to discuss saving money with their clients.

"I think the players are more sophisticated and the issues are drawn pretty clearly. Basically what has occurred is that a CBA is in place the owners voted to accept, and certainly the players accepted, in 2006. And the owners had the option to opt out, they did in 2008, and they want to take back some of that money."

That is a central issue.

NFL owners say they need a restructured deal because they can't afford the revenue split of the CBA about to expire. NFL revenues are expected to be near \$9 billion for 2010, with nearly 60 percent of designated revenues

going to players. Owners claim huge debts from building stadiums and starting up the NFL Network and other ventures, making it impossible to be profitable.

According to the NFL, the average player salary rose about 35 percent from \$1.4 million in 2005 — the last year of the old deal — to \$1.9 million in 2009. Figures for this season aren't comparable because there's no salary cap.

The players insist the league and the game is healthy, pointing to huge payouts from the networks, impressive TV ratings, solid attendance, profitable marketing partnerships and overseas interest.

The players have asked the teams to open their books. Goodell responds that the players know where the league's money is being spent "down to the penny."

As the NFL prepares for the final 16 regular-season games of the season, intense negotiations aren't on the immediate horizon. Although no deadlines are imminent, it's difficult not to be concerned about 2011 — and beyond. That doesn't mean a gloom-and-doom scenario is upon us.

"The best way to get through it is make all parties have an understanding of the ramifications of a stoppage," Dogra says.

"You are very hopeful because there are intelligent people on both sides of the table, the sport is the most popular and very profitable for all parties involved." □

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Coach Kalone in 2nd on wins list; Duke romps

By JOEDY McCREARY

AP Sports Writer

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski moved past longtime rival Dean Smith into second place on the men's all-time wins list Wednesday night when the No. 1 Blue Devils routed North Carolina-Greensboro 108-62.

Krzyzewski posted his 880th career victory. Coach K trails only Bob Knight, who mentored Krzyzewski and coached him at Army on the way to 902 wins. One fan in the stands held a sign that said: "You're next, Bobby." When the buzzer sounded, Krzyzewski hugged UNC Greensboro coach — and former assistant — Mike Dement before making his way across the court for a television interview. The Hall of Fame coach waved to the Duke fans who helped pack the 23,000-seat Greensboro Coliseum.

Kyle Singler scored 27 points and Nolan Smith had 22 of his season-high 26 points in the first half for the Blue Devils (12-0).

Duke shrugged off an eight-day break and shot a season-best 60.9 percent, scored 42 points off 23 turnovers and hit the 100-point mark for the second time.

The reigning national champions won their 22nd straight, pushing Krzyzewski past the man who coached the Tar Heels for 36 seasons

before retiring in 1997 as the winningest coach in Division I history. Knight then passed Smith and retired nearly three years ago.

"I congratulate Mike on this milestone victory," Smith said in a statement issued by North Carolina following the game. "I am sure he would want to share the credit for the wins with all his players and staff. I enjoyed competing against Mike's teams throughout the years I was at UNC. I wish him continued health and personal success."

If the Blue Devils run through the rest of their schedule undefeated, Krzyzewski — who is 880-279 in his 36th season as a head coach — will catch Knight in this same arena in March in the championship game of the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament and pass him in the first round of the NCAA tournament.

The Greensboro Coliseum, located roughly an hour's drive from Duke's Durham campus, has become a second home for Krzyzewski and the Blue Devils, who haven't been beaten here since a loss to Maryland in the 2004 ACC title game. They won the league tournament here for the fifth time under Krzyzewski last March before rolling through the NCAA tournament on the way claiming to their fourth national title, and haven't lost since.

Seth Curry scored 15 points, Miles Plumlee and Andre

Dawkins added 11 apiece and Ryan Kelly scored 10 for the Blue Devils, who hadn't played since Dec. 20. This was their fourth straight game without freshman point guard Kyrie Irving, who averages a team-best 17.4 points but remains out indefinitely with an injured big toe on his right foot.

They certainly didn't need him against the winless Spartans, who offered little resistance in falling to 0-3 against No. 1 teams in the program's history. Duke opened the game on a 15-2 run, went up by double figures to stay roughly 6 1/2 minutes in, and outscored UNC Greensboro 22-7 midway through the half to open up a permanent 20-point lead. Singler's jumper in traffic with about 7:15 left made it 39-15 and Smith's fast-break dunk roughly 5 minutes later gave the Blue Devils their largest lead of the half, 49-24.

Duke's 53 first-half points were a season high, and by the break, Smith was two points shy of his season high. He finished three away from the career-best 29 points he scored against Baylor in the South Regional final last March. Smith made it a 30-point game when his layup with 14 minutes left pushed it to 71-40.

Aaron Brackett had 14 points to lead UNC Greensboro (0-12). The Spartans previously fell to top-ranked Duke teams



Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski waves to the crowd after Duke's 108-62 win over North Carolina-Greensboro in an NCAA college basketball game in Greensboro, N.C., Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2010. Krzyzewski moved past longtime rival Dean Smith into second place on the men's all-time wins list.

in 1997 and 2005, dropped to Devils and have just one win 0-9 all-time against the Blue against an ACC school. □



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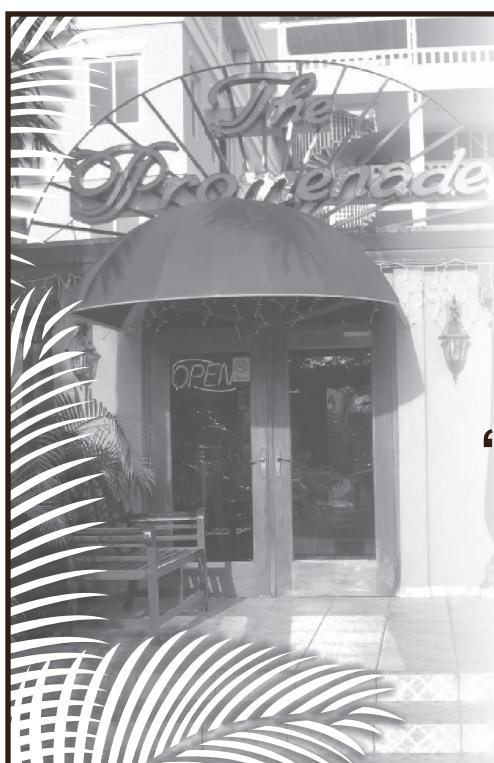


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Oklahoma State beats Arizona in Alamo Bowl

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Oklahoma State finished its first ever 11-win season with a 36-10 victory over Arizona in college football's Alamo Bowl on Wednesday.

Justin Blackmon caught two touchdown passes, showboating into the end zone to cap a 71-yard strike. The Biletnikoff Award winner as the nation's top receiver set a collegiate record with his 12th straight game with at least 100 yards receiving and a touchdown. The sophomore caught nine passes for 117 yards in perhaps his last college game.

Quarterback Brandon Weeden was 25 of 41 for 240 yards for Oklahoma State. It was the final game plan for Cowboys offensive

coordinator Dana Holgorsen, who is leaving to become the coach-in-waiting at West Virginia.

Oklahoma State, which led the nation in total offense, never trailed and scored at least 33 points for the 11th time this season.

After Arizona couldn't convert a fourth down at the Cowboys' 29-yard line on its opening possession, Weeden found Blackmon practically uncovered down the sideline. So open was Blackmon that he pulled up before reaching the end zone and trotted parallel along the goal line before finally making the touchdown official.

Arizona ended the year with five straight losses. Nick Foles completed 32 of 50



Harmon Killebrew says he has cancer

By JON KRAWCZYNSKI
AP Baseball Writer

MINNEAPOLIS — Hall of Fame slugger Harmon Killebrew has been diagnosed with esophageal cancer. The 74-year-old Killebrew released a statement through the Minnesota Twins on Thursday, saying he expects to make a full recovery from the "very serious" condition. "With my wife, Nita, by my side, I have begun preparing for what is perhaps the most difficult battle of my life," Killebrew said.

Killebrew hit 573 home runs and made 11 All-Star appearances during his 22-year career spent mostly with the Washington Senators and Twins. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1984 and was fifth on the career home run list when he retired in 1975 after one season with the Kansas City Royals.

Killebrew currently ranks 11th on the homer list, and his eight seasons with 40 or more homers still is tied for second in league history to Babe Ruth. Killebrew has maintained a regular presence with the Twins for years. He now lives in the Phoenix area and said

he is receiving treatment at the Mayo Clinic nearby. He was optimistic about his chances for recovery.

"The Mayo Clinic is one of the largest and most experienced medical centers treating esophageal cancer in the world. In the past decade, they have made tremendous advances in the treatment of this disease," he said. "Nita and I feel blessed to have access to the best doctors and medical care."

The congenial heavy hitter is one of the most beloved players in Twins history, as much for his gentle and approachable nature off the field as for the towering home runs he hit during his playing days.

Twins designated hitter Jim Thome passed Killebrew on the career home run list in August, belting two at brand new Target Field. After the feat, Killebrew issued a gracious congratulatory message to Thome.

"I speak very highly of Jim Thome," Killebrew said in September. "Not only is he a great player, but he's a great individual. I think he was a little apprehensive about



This April 2, 2010 file photo shows former Minnesota Twins player and Hall of Famer Harmon Killebrew in Minneapolis. Killebrew has been diagnosed with esophageal cancer.

Associated Press

passing me up. I said, 'Jim, I passed a lot of guys up myself along the way. I hope you hit 100 more.'"

Killebrew's No. 3 jersey is retired, and he made several appearances at the Twins' new outdoor ballpark last season, including during their playoff series against the Yankees. He is one of the biggest draws at the team's annual Twins Fest, a fan festival in January that serves as a buildup to spring training.

"I thank everyone for their outpouring of prayers, compassion and concern," he said. "Nita and I ask for privacy during this difficult journey." □

passes for 280 yards and a touchdown, but threw three interceptions, including one returned by Markelle Martin for a 62-yard score.

Military Bowl
Maryland 51, East Carolina 20

In Washington, Maryland coach Ralph Friedgen is heading into unemployment as a winner, with a victory over East Carolina in the Military Bowl.

Already the Atlantic Coast Conference coach of the year, and the engineer of the second-biggest regular season turnaround in the country, Friedgen ended his 10-year run at Maryland with a romp.

The Terrapins forced four turnovers, Da'Rel Scott ran for 200 yards and D.J. Adams had four short touchdown runs.

New Maryland athletic director Kevin Anderson announced last week that Friedgen was being fired, effective after the bowl game, with the school buying out the final year of the 63-year-old coach's contract for \$2 million.

Friedgen's last act was the second-biggest margin of victory in Maryland bowl history as well as the most points the school has scored in a bowl. Friedgen went 5-2

in bowl games at the school. Scott had second-half touchdown runs of 61 and 91 yards on back-to-back Terrapins offensive plays and posted the school's first 200-yard rushing game since 2003.

East Carolina quarterback Dominique Davis completed 35 of 57 passes for 268 yards with one touchdown and two interceptions.

Texas Bowl
Illinois 38, Baylor 14
In Houston, Mikel Leshoure ran for 184 yards and three touchdowns as Illinois earned its first bowl victory since 1999, beating Baylor in the Texas Bowl.

The Illini spoiled the Bears' first bowl appearance in 16 seasons. Both teams finished at 7-6.

Leshoure had a 5-yard TD run in the second quarter, a 13-yard score in the third quarter and another 5-yard touchdown run in the fourth period. The performance gave him the school single-season rushing record with 1,697 yards.

The Illini built a 24-0 lead and Leshoure's last touchdown put the game out of reach. Baylor's Robert Griffin III threw for 306 yards and a touchdown, but his two fumbles in the first half put the Bears behind. □

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NHL Roundup

Red Wings fight back to beat Stars 7-3

DALLAS (AP) — Patrick Eaves scored a hat trick as the Detroit Red Wings fought back from two goals down to beat the Dallas Stars 7-3 in the NHL on Wednesday.

Goals by Brad Richards, Mark Fistic and Jamie Benn in a 1:14 span in the second period gave the Stars a 3-1 lead. But Eaves struck on the power play after Nicklas Lidstrom scored at even strength to help the Red Wings tie it 3-3 entering the final period.

Brad Stuart's blast from the point got past screened goalie Kari Lehtonen to give Detroit the lead for good.

Kris Draper and Jiri Hudler also scored for the Western Conference-leading Red Wings.

Coyotes 6, Kings 3

In Glendale, Arizona, Shane Doan scored two goals as the Phoenix offense sparked to beat Los Angeles.

Scottie Upshall and Keith Yandle each had three points as the Coyotes set season highs for goals and goals in the first period with four. Upshall had a goal and two assists, and Yandle had three assists. Brent MacLean scored his first NHL goal in his first game, and Ray Whitney and Kyle Turris added goals for the Coyotes.

Brad Richardson, Marco Sturm and Ryan Smith scored for Los Angeles.

Wild 5, Sharks 3

In St. Paul, Minnesota, Kyle Brodziak scored twice in Minnesota's comeback victory over San Jose. The Wild trailed 3-2 and appeared to be headed toward another home loss after failing to score on a 4-minute power play to start the third period. But Chuck Kobasew, Brent

Burns and Brodziak scored in a 5-minute span and the Wild overwhelmed the suddenly reeling Sharks in the final period.

Joe Thornton, Devin Setoguchi and Patrick Marleau scored for San Jose.

Islanders 2, Penguins 1, SO

In Uniondale, New York, Sidney Crosby's 25-game points streak was snapped as Pittsburgh's high-powered offense was held in check by New York, who took a shootout victory.

Islanders and goalie Rick DiPietro, who stopped the Pittsburgh captain and the rest of the Penguins' high-powered offense in a 2-1 shootout victory Wednesday night.

Crosby had at least a point in every game since Nov. 3. The run, in which Crosby had 26 goals and 24 assists, was the longest in the NHL since 1992-93. Crosby also had scored a goal in five consecutive games before being shut down

by the Islanders.

Crosby was also denied on Pittsburgh's second shootout attempt by goalie Rick DiPietro.

Josh Bailey gave the Islanders a 1-0 lead in the second period, but Chris Conner tied it before the frame was over.

P.A. Parenteau put the Islanders ahead in the shootout and DiPietro sealed the win by stopping Mark Letestu.

Hurricanes 4, Senators 0

In Ottawa, Cam Ward made 37 saves for his second shutout of the season as Carolina beat Ottawa.

Zach Boychuk scored goals 3:48 apart in the first for Carolina. Erik Cole and Patrick Dwyer also scored for the Hurricanes.

In other NHL games it was N.Y. Islanders 2, Pittsburgh 1, SO; N.Y. Rangers 3, New Jersey 1; Carolina 4, Ottawa 0; Minnesota 5, San Jose 3; Detroit 7, Dallas 3; and Phoenix 6, Los Angeles 3.

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New York Islanders fans react as Pittsburgh Penguins center Sidney Crosby (87) skates away after missing his shot in the shootout of the Islanders' 2-1 victory over the Penguins in an NHL hockey game at Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, N.Y., Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2010.

Associated Press

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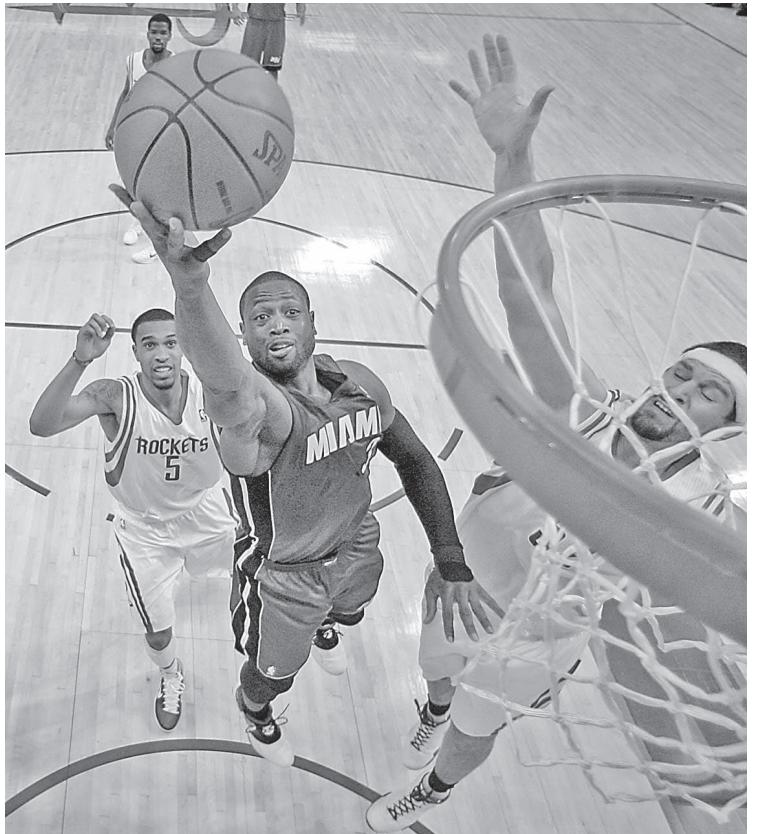
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Miami Heat's Dwyane Wade (3) goes up for a shot as Houston Rockets' Courtney Lee (5) and Brad Miller, right, defend during the fourth quarter of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2010, in Houston. The Heat beat the Rockets 125-119.

Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Dwyane Wade scored 45 points as the Miami Heat extended their road winning streak to 10 games with a 125-119 win over the Houston Rockets in

NBA Roundup

Wade gets 45 as Heat scorch Rockets 125-119

the NBA on Wednesday. Wade shook off a hard foul from Aaron Brooks early in the fourth quarter to reach 45 points for the eighth time in his career. He hit 17 of 24 shots, went 10 for 10 from the free-throw line and pulled down seven rebounds. It was the first time in his career that he'd reached 40 points on consecutive nights. LeBron James scored 20 points and had nine assists for the Heat, who have won 16 of their past 17 overall.

Luis Scola scored 22 points for the Rockets, who had an eight-game home winning streak snapped.

Lakers 103, Hornets 88

In New Orleans, Lamar Odom responded to his first time

out of the starting lineup this season by scoring 24 points off the bench as Los Angeles convincingly ended a rare three-game losing streak by downing New Orleans. Kobe Bryant added 20 points as the Lakers snapped out a lapse in which they lost by 15 or more points in their previous three games. Chris Paul had 20 points for the Hornets. David West twisted his left ankle late in the first half and tried to play through it, but finished with only eight points in 28 minutes.

Pistons 104, Celtics 92

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Kevin Garnett left in the first quarter with a leg injury, and Boston looked ragged without him in a loss to Detroit.

The Celtics lost for only the second time in 17 games, but they're encountering some potentially serious adversity now. Garnett hurt himself on a dunk late in the first quarter, and although X-rays revealed no fracture in his right leg, he didn't return. Boston was also without point guard Rajon Rondo, who missed his sixth straight game with a sprained ankle.

Tracy McGrady scored 21 points for the Pistons, who led 45-37 at halftime and pushed the margin to 16 in the third quarter.

Hawks 103, Warriors 93

In Atlanta, Josh Smith had 22 points and 10 rebounds to lead Atlanta over Golden State. Al Horford had 21 points and 15 rebounds for the Hawks.

Dorell Wright scored a career-high 32 points for Golden State, which lost its first game in four.

In Los Angeles, Al Jefferson had 31 points and 10 rebounds to help Utah beat Los Angeles. Andre Kirilenko missed his first game of the season because of a lower back strain and reserve C.J. Miles also sat out because of flulike symptoms, leaving the Jazz vulnerable at small forward. Utah rookie Gordon Hayward made his fifth start of the season in Kirilenko's spot, and had 17 points and six rebounds.

Blake Griffin led the Clippers with 30 points and 12 rebounds.

In Oklahoma City, Kevin Durant scored 27 points before taking the fourth quarter off as Oklahoma City rolled past error-prone New Jersey. Oklahoma City forced a season-high 23 turnovers and bounced back from a loss in what's becoming trademark fashion. The Thunder are 10-1 after a loss this season.

In other NBA games it was Atlanta 103, Golden State 93; Charlotte 101, Cleveland 92; Washington 104, Indiana 90; Detroit 104, Boston 92; Denver 119, Minnesota 113; L.A. Lakers 103, New Orleans 88; Oklahoma City 114, New Jersey 93; Miami 125, Houston 119; Philadelphia 123, Phoenix 110; Sacramento 100, Memphis 98; and Utah 103, L.A. Clippers 95. □

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Securing New Year's Eve in Times Square

A million people to watch the ball drop

NEW YORK — It's the biggest public party in the country. Nearly a million revelers will cram into the streets of Times Square to watch the ball drop on New Year's Eve.

It's also remarkably crime-free, safe and orderly. In the past decade, there have been few arrests and virtually no major problems funneling people in and out of the confetti-filled streets to ring in the New Year.

That's due mostly to what the partygoers don't notice: Throngs of police and counterterrorism officers blanketing the area, working from a security plan specifically tailored for the event.

Manhole covers are sealed. Counter-snipers are stationed on secret rooftops. Officers carry beeper-sized radiation detectors.

Plainclothes officers are stationed in the pens with the crowds, along with a uniformed presence and undercover officers. Bomb-sniffing dogs are on site. Purses are searched. Checkpoints are set up and perimeters are created using concrete blocks. Passing vehicles are checked for safety. Haz-mat teams are

on standby.

NYPD brass tweak the plan every year, using lessons learned from previous scares like the botched Times Square car bombing in May and the attempted bombing of a Christmas tree lighting in Portland, Oregon near Thanksgiving. NYPD counterterrorism chief James Waters mined information on the suicide bombing this month in Stockholm, Sweden. "Intelligence informs a lot of what we do," Waters said. "Understanding the threat, always the basics, understanding what the threat is against New York, what's the threat against the country, and everything that comes behind that."

People have gathered for a century in Times Square to ring in the New Year, but it hasn't always been a family-friendly affair. In the early 1990s, before the redevelopment of the bowtie collection of streets at Broadway and Seventh Avenue, the area was overrun with crime and home to sex shops and peep shows. Revelers would gather with plenty of liquor as shopkeepers boarded up their windows.

with plywood for the night, hoping no one would smash through. Dick Clark broadcast his ABC show from the area, but he did it inside, away from the crowds.

Longtime residents say it was a boozy, drunken mess.

"In the 1990s, the police wouldn't even let us play music on an outdoor sound system," said Tim Tompkins, president of the Times Square Alliance, which runs the event along with Countdown Entertainment.

"They were afraid to draw any more people because it was wild."

But Disney, upscale hotels, theme stores and restaurants arrived in the mid-1990s and changed the feel of the area and drew more families and tourists, and with it, a softer crowd.

Police began to ramp up their security effort with worries over millennium threats.

Officers used metal pens to control where the crowd stood — keeping a path clear for emergency trucks. And they banned alcohol and backpacks. Uniformed police officers flooded the area. Plainclothes officers roamed



the crowds.

After Sept. 11, 2001, "we added a counterterrorism overlay" to New Year's security, said Paul Browne, the

NYPD's deputy commissioner for public information. "We have kept changing it based on the needs ever since."

Since the terror attack, there have been at least six foiled plots against the city — including the plot by Faisal Shahzad to bomb Times Square with a used car stuffed with a propane-and-gasoline bomb on May 1.

The department has answered with ever-developing tools, like the network of private and police cameras called the Lower and Midtown Manhattan Security initiatives. □

The department recently added 500 cameras to the subway stops at Times Square, Grand Central Terminal and Penn Station.

The cameras are managed at a command center in lower Manhattan, where a single high-bandwidth fiber optic network connects the cameras to police. It will be used New Year's Eve to help track any suspicious activity.

The department meets months in advance to set rules and share plans with the area restaurants and hotels that host fancy parties, along with the Times Square Alliance. They plot out where TV trucks will be stationed, and the best exit routes in case of an emergency. □

U.S. revokes Venezuelan ambassador's visa



His Excellency Bernardo Alvarez Herrera became ambassador of Venezuela to the United States on Jan. 27, 2003.

WASHINGTON – The United States revoked the visa of Venezuela's ambassador to Washington in retaliation for President Hugo Chavez's rejection of a nominated U.S. envoy critical of his government, the U.S. State

Department said Wednesday. The move stokes long-simmering tensions between Washington and the socialist Chavez, who is a fierce U.S. critic, but is unlikely to affect an oil trade crucial to both nations.

Chavez had blocked Larry Palmer's arrival after the American diplomat accused Venezuela's government of close ties to leftist Colombian rebels. He also alleged declining morale and professionalism in Venezuela's armed forces. Caracas's insistence on refusing to let Palmer take up his post prompted Washington to effectively expel Venezuela's envoy, Bernardo Alvarez Herrera, by withdrawing his visa, diplomatic sources and the U.S. State Department said. "It's politicking as usual between these two but I don't think we're about to see a crude crisis. They both need to keep exports flowing," said a non-U.S. diplomat in Caracas. The South American OPEC member, which is in a second year of recession, sells about 1.2 million barrels per day of oil and products to the United States. That makes Venezuela the fifth biggest U.S. supplier after Canada, Saudi Arabia, Mexico and Nigeria.

Although seeking to diversify its export portfolio to sell more to political allies like China, Venezuela cannot now afford to drastically reduce sales to the United States. Threats by Chavez in the past to do so have not materialized.

The spat is, however, sure to add to Chavez's anger over recent U.S. criticism of his assumption of decree powers for 18 months.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Caracas had brought the visa measure upon itself. "We said there would be consequences when the Venezuelan government rescinded agreement regarding our nominee, Larry Palmer. We have taken appropriate, proportional and reciprocal action," Toner told reporters in an e-mail.

CHAVEZ: "RESPECT US"

There was no immediate reaction from Chavez but U.S.-Venezuelan lawyer Eva Golinger, who is a close ally of his, condemned the move as unjustified.

"USA revokes the visa of the Venezuelan ambassador in Washington in revenge for the decision on Larry Palmer," she was quoted by Venezuelan state media as saying.

"Such cynicism and hypocrisy."

Alvarez was believed to be out of the country on Wednesday. In a speech Tuesday, the fiery Chavez, who has taken on Fidel Castro's mantle as the leading critic of the United States in Latin America, reiterated his opposition to Palmer. □

"We have denied permission to this aspiring ambassador and now the U.S. government threatens us with reprisals," he said.

"They will do what they want but that man is not coming here as ambassador. Anyone who comes here as an ambassador has to show respect. This is a country that must be respected."

There had been hopes of a rapprochement when Chavez cut tirades against the "empire" and shook hands with Obama at a summit soon after the U.S. leader took office in January 2009. But within months of that, Chavez said Obama was proving to be a disappointment and continuing the unacceptable foreign policies of his predecessor. Chavez has had a fiery time with U.S. envoys. In 2008, he expelled U.S. Ambassador Patrick Duddy from Caracas in a dispute over what he said was Washington's involvement in violent protests in Bolivia.

Among his comments to a U.S. senator, Palmer also had expressed concern about Cuba's influence within the Venezuelan military. Chavez is a close ally of Cuba and thousands of Cubans work in Venezuela as doctors, nurses, teachers, technicians and advisers. □

At Detroit-area store

Two workers killed in blast

WAYNE, Mich. – Rescue workers spent all day and into the night combing through the pile of crumpled drywall, twisted metal and broken bits of couches, dining sets and dressers that was once William C. Franks Furniture store in the hope that two buried workers might be found alive, just as the store's owner was. After more than 12 hours of searching, crews on Wednesday night instead recovered the bodies of a salesman and clerical worker who were killed in the natural gas explosion at the store in downtown Wayne, about 15 miles from Detroit.

Now, investigators must determine whether natural gas

caused Wednesday morning's explosion as crews clean up the mess. Eric Smith, a fire battalion chief who was assisting from Westland, noted the roof was made of concrete, making it difficult for anyone to survive the disaster.

"You always hold out hope, but with that kind of weight, there wasn't much to keep the structure from coming down," Smith said after the second body was removed.

The explosion that happened around 9 a.m. not only destroyed the store, it shattered windows at nearby businesses. "It sounded like a bomb," said 47-year-old Lisa Johns, who said she was watching television in bed at her home

nearby and rushed to the scene. "The power went off and came back on two or three minutes later."

Groups of firefighters entered the building four and five at a time, scraping away at the rubble using long poles with hooks on the end. Bobcats and front-loaders moved around the area. Video footage shot from TV helicopters showed dozens of rescuers working on and around the remains of the store. Wayne City Manager John Zech said rescuers using search dogs found the body of salesman James Zell, 64, of neighboring Westland, in the debris Wednesday night. Later, Shawn Bell, Wayne's deputy fire marshal, said



A firefighter surveys the damage after an apparent gas explosion at William C. Franks Furniture store on Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2010 in Wayne, Mich. Wayne City Manager John Zech says owner Paul Franks is in critical condition in the burn unit of the University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor.

workers found the body of a woman in the rubble.

The woman's name was not immediately released. Zech had said earlier the missing woman was a clerical worker for the store in her 50s who

also was from Westland.

Owner Paul Franks, who was pulled out shortly after the blast, was in serious condition in the burn unit at the University of Michigan's medical center. □

Obama bypasses Senate

New U.S. Ambassadors named

Posts to Azerbaijan, Syria, Turkey and the Czech Republic

By MATTHEW LEE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama has bypassed the Senate and directly appointed four new U.S. ambassadors whose nominations had been stalled or blocked by lawmakers for months.

The White House announced Wednesday that Obama would use his power to make recess appointments to fill envoy posts to Azerbaijan, Syria and NATO allies Turkey and the Czech Republic. Recess appointments are made when the Senate is not in session and last only until the end of the next session of Congress. They are frequently used when Senate confirmation is not possible.

Specific senators had blocked or refused to consider the confirmations of the nominees for various reasons, including questions about their

qualifications. But in the most high-profile case, that of the new envoy to Syria, Robert Ford, a number of senators objected because they believed sending an ambassador to the country would reward it for bad behavior.

“Making underserved concessions to Syria tells the regime in Damascus that it can continue to pursue its dangerous agenda and not face any consequences from the U.S.,” Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen R-Fla., the incoming chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said in a statement.

“That is the wrong message to be sending to a regime which continues to harm and threaten U.S. interests and those of such critical allies as Israel.”

The administration had argued that returning an ambassador to Syria after a five-year absence would help persuade Syria to change its policies

regarding Israel, Lebanon, Iraq and support for extremist groups.

Syria is designated a “state sponsor of terrorism” by the State Department.

President George W. Bush’s administration withdrew a full-time ambassador from Syria in 2005 after terrorism accusations and to protest the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, killed in a Beirut truck bombing that his supporters blamed on Syria. Syria denied involvement.

Obama nominated Ford, a career diplomat and a former ambassador to Algeria, to the post in February but his nomination stalled after his confirmation hearings and was never voted on.

The other Obama nominees announced Wednesday are Matthew Bryza for Azerbaijan, Norman Eisen for the Czech Republic and



President Barack Obama listens to a question during his news conference in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building at the White House in Washington December 22, 2010.

Francis Ricciardone for ambassador to Egypt during Turkey.

Bryza, a career diplomat, was opposed by some in the Armenian-American community because of comments he made in his previous position as deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs while trying to negotiate an end to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The nomination of Ricciardone, another career diplomat who served as



In this photo taken Thursday, Dec. 9, 2010, empty bottles for cola containing THC, known as consumables, are pictured in Las Vegas.

LAS VEGAS — Nevada is known for letting just about anything slide, whether it's booze, bets or brothels. But even here there are limits.

It has been OK to smoke pot to treat illness for ten years. But don't think about selling it. Lately, federal agents and local police have taken notice, raiding several pot shops in and around Sin City.

All of it has pot activists scratching

Nevada snubs legal marijuana

their heads: How is a state that has long lured visitors with promises of unconstrained debauchery stricter with pot than its more wholesome neighbors of Colorado, Arizona and California? “I really thought they would leave us alone,” said Pierre Werner, whose family’s pot shop was raided and who now faces federal charges. “No one should go to prison for a plant.”

Political leaders and historians say these activists don’t know Nevada.

Sure, they say, the state has libertarian leanings and is generally willing to prosper from activities that most states have declared repugnant.

For many, however, pot is for hippies. And Nevada, borne in the rugged days of the Wild West, is no place for hippies.

“The attitude was real men drank, whored and gambled — these are the vices of frontier men and women,” said Guy Rocha, Nevada’s former archivist.

“When it comes to drugs, Nevada has looked at it as, ‘that’s what those wild people in California do, or New York or Oregon,’” he said.

Nevada passed its medical marijuana law in 2000, four years after California passed its first

in-the-nation program. In all, 15 states and the District of Columbia allow it. Advocates say the strict Nevada law makes it nearly impossible to legally smoke pot. Patients cannot buy or sell marijuana and can only grow seven plants for personal use.

Nevada’s health department, which regulates medical marijuana, tells patients it cannot provide information about how to grow cannabis.

During the past year, at least 27 marijuana shops have opened in Las Vegas, according to weedmaps.com, an online dispensary and physician locator service.

The discreet outposts feature lengthy menus with whimsical names such as the Incredible Hulk, Purple Monster, Green Cheese and Pineapple Crack.

Transactions are called donations, not purchases. Customers are patients. Marijuana is medicine. Police, however, still means trouble.

The stores, many saying they are referral services for doctors willing to recommend marijuana, were largely left alone at first.

Then came reports that undercover police officers were making buys at the dispensaries.

In September, it was official. Local

and federal investigators served search warrants at several marijuana shops in and around Las Vegas.

Law enforcement officials refuse to discuss the raids, saying the investigations remained open. They would not say what prompted the crackdown.

Federal law continues to classify marijuana as a controlled substance, prohibited from being prescribed by doctors.

Attorney General Eric Holder has said federal prosecutors will not pursue people who sell marijuana in compliance with a state law, but has warned that people who violate both federal and state laws will be targeted. Nevada has long lured revelers from across the world with promises of leggy temptresses, modern gladiators and fertile slot machines.

Nearly a third of the state’s revenue comes from taxes on casino winnings. More than a decade ago, marijuana proponents enticed by Nevada’s hedonistic reputation began targeting the Silver State. Until 2000, Nevada had one of the nation’s strictest marijuana laws, when possession of a single joint was a felony punishable by a year or more in prison. □

Bellagio nixing \$25,000 chip after casino heist



LAS VEGAS — Las Vegas casino bosses are serving notice to the bandit who made off with \$1.5 million in chips from the Bellagio: Try to redeem those worth \$25,000

soon or they'll become worthless.

Bellagio owner MGM Resorts International is giving public notice that it's discontinuing its standard chip valued at \$25,000 and calling for all gamblers holding the chips to redeem them by April 22. After that, gambling regulators say each red chip with a gray inlay won't be worth more than the plastic it's cast from. "The bottom line is that they're not money," said David Salas, deputy enforcement chief for the Nevada Gaming Control Board.

MGM Resorts first posted notice of the redemption last week in the classifieds of the Las Vegas Review-Journal newspaper. That's one week after a robber wearing a motorcycle helmet held up a craps table at gunpoint and made off with a bag of chips of varying denominations.

Police and casino officials have been working since the Dec. 14 heist to try to locate

the bandit and keep watch on anyone trying to cash in the chips, which ranged in denomination from \$100 to \$25,000.

A police spokeswoman said Wednesday there have been no significant developments in the case since then.

MGM Resorts spokesman Alan Feldman told The Associated Press the chips were switched out at the tables within an hour of the robbery, and the Bellagio immediately filed to discontinue the chips. Feldman said the move was designed to avoid inconveniencing players using the high value chips. He said he did not know how many chips existed and were uncashed.

"Obviously, anyone walking with one of the old series is going to be subject to a certain amount of questioning as to how they obtained them — assuming it isn't someone we know," Feldman told the AP. "It's pretty unusual

for someone we don't know to come strolling up with a handful of \$25,000 chips."

Discontinuing chips — though done in this case because of the robbery — is not uncommon for Las Vegas casinos, even at high denominations, Salas said. Commemorative chips to mark a noteworthy prizefight for example, often have a finite circulation. On Wednesday, the Silver Nugget Casino in North Las Vegas posted notice it planned to discontinue chips with the Mahoney's Silver Nugget logo.

State laws require casino operators to serve notice, file a plan with regulators and give gamblers a reasonable amount of time to cash in any chips they're holding — in this case four months.

The move may be moot given other casino safeguards designed to track patrons who cash high-value chips, but will help the casino by lessening the number of chips outside its possession. □

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BUSINESS

Aruba TODAY

Jobless claims lowest in more than two years

New claims for unemployment benefits dropped more than expected last week to their lowest level in more than two years, suggesting the labor market recovery was gaining strength.

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits fell 34,000 to a seasonally adjusted 388,000, the lowest reading since early July 2008, the Labor Department said on Thursday. That was well below economists' expectations for 415,000.

The prior week's claims figure was revised modestly up to 422,000 from the previously reported 420,000. A Labor Department official said there was nothing unusual in the state-level data and described the report as clean.

"This adds to the idea that the jobs picture is improving ... this is another feather in the cap of the idea of recovery," said Adam Sarhan, chief executive of Sarhan Capital in

New York.

U.S. Treasury debt prices, already soft before the data, lost more ground, while the dollar pared losses against the yen. S&P stock index futures trimmed losses.

The four-week average of new jobless claims, considered a better measure of underlying labor market trends, fell 12,500 to 414,000, the lowest level since the week ending July 26, 2008.

The steady decline in claims in recent weeks likely indicates the pace of job creation picked up this month, after the Labor Department's non-farm payrolls report showed employers added a paltry 39,000 jobs in November.

The December employment data is due on January 7, and a preliminary Reuters survey shows economists expect non-farm payrolls increased 126,000 this month, but still not enough to significantly reduce

the unemployment rate, which is expected to have edged down to 9.7 percent from 9.8 percent in November.

The claims data also showed the number of people still receiving benefits under regular state programs after an initial week of aid rose 57,000 to 4.13 million in the week ended December 18, above market expectations for 4.10 million. The prior week's figure was revised slightly up to 4.07 million.

The so-called continuing claims data covered the survey week for the December employment report's household survey from which the unemployment rate is derived.

The jobless rate is likely to remain elevated as the improving labor market and general economic conditions lure discouraged job seekers back into the labor force.

The number of people on emergency unemployment benefits fell 77,741



to 3.71 million in the week ended December 11, the latest week for which data is available. A total of 8.87 million people were claiming unemployment benefits during that period under all programs. □



Spain's prime minister said Thursday he expected the Spanish economy to grow again in the final three months of the year after a flat third quarter performance raised fears that the eurozone's fourth largest economy could be heading back into recession.

Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero said his prediction last year that 2010 would see a return to growth had been vindicated, but that further reforms were necessary in the year ahead to strengthen

the economy.

"This has happened," he said. "But we know that it is slow and weak growth and we still have decisive tasks ahead to consolidate and strengthen that growth."

Giving reporters an end-of-year review of the country's economic and political situation, Zapatero said none of the three quarters this year had falling output and that he expected the final quarter to show growth had returned. Official figures for the fourth quarter are not due till early

Spain PM says economy will grow in 4th quarter

2011.

The Spanish economy posted a flat quarterly performance during the July-September period though it rose 0.2 percent on a year-on-year basis the first such rise in seven quarters. In the first two quarters of the year, growth was extremely tepid. Spain's recovery from recession has been the slowest of Europe's main economies, such as Germany and France.

The country's recession was triggered by a collapse in its key real estate sector during the international financial crisis.

One of the government's chief tasks is to slash a swollen deficit from 11.2 percent of gross domestic product in 2009 to within the

European Union limit of 3 percent by 2013.

Zapatero said the government was on track to meet those objectives following a series of labor market reforms and austerity measures introduced earlier this year. However, international bodies insist Spain needs to do more.

Zapatero said he was determined to present reforms to the country's pension system including pushing back retirement age from 65 years to 67 years by the end of next month.

"It would be doing the country a disservice not to make these changes now," Zapatero said.

He argued that adjustments to how pensions are calculated are needed if the system is

not to collapse in the coming years as the number of people retiring swells.

The planned change in retirement age has triggered threats from unions of a second general strike, following one called in September against the austerity measures and labor reforms.

Zapatero said he was confident 2011 would lead to greater employment and help bring down a jobless rate of nearly 20 percent, the highest rate in the eurozone. The premier also announced increases of between 1 percent and 2 percent for pensioners and minimum wage earners, saying that even in hard times the government would not forget those who had least. □

HEALTH**Aruba TODAY****Cuban vaccine for lung cancer showing success in trials**

HAVANA, Cuba — Cuban authorities have announced plans to extend the clinical trials for its lung cancer vaccine to terminal patients in stages three and four of the disease. Cimavax EGF, the first Cuban therapeutic vaccine to treat advanced lung cancer and the only one registered in the world for this type of malignant tumor, is being extended by way of a stage four clinical trial protocol, which includes people with advanced lung cancer in stages three and four who had no response to specific oncological treatment and are receiving palliative

care in their health areas. Word of this has come from Pedro Pablo Guerra, of the National Coordination Center for Clinical Trials who told the Cuban News Agency that the vaccine had proven effectiveness and increased the survival of patients with this disease. This clinical trial, which began in June 2009 in Bayamo, eastern Granma province, is being extended throughout the country in the polyclinics, and specifically measures safety and effectiveness by way of the study of adverse effects and variables, such as survival, quality of life and nutritional

state. This is the first time that a clinical trial is carried out in Primary Health Care and Guerra said there are currently about a hundred patients in the trial, who will receive the drug as their health permits. He pointed out that this is part of the objectives of the Ministry of Public Health in bringing products to primary care, adding that for 2011, the institution has among its projects the inclusion of

another group of patients. The cancer treatment specialist stressed that currently there is a phase three clinical trial of the vaccine, which is carried out in hospitals and should include some 500 patients, a study that will give the definitive registration of the product, recognized in various countries. The National Coordination Center for Clinical Trials, which has nearly 20 years of experience

in this area, is currently working on over 60 clinical trials for indications in breast, lung and prostate cancers; it also has projects related to AIDS, in conjunction with Havana's Center for Molecular Immunology. However, the performance of more clinical trials according to international standards is acknowledged among the challenges for the institution. □

Nintendo issues age warning on its 3D games

TOKYO — Japan's Nintendo has issued a health warning over the 3D function on its upcoming gaming console, recommending children aged six and under do not play with it to prevent damage to their eyes.

At a promotional event near Tokyo in January, "we will offer 2Ds alone to children aged six and younger as continuing to watch 3D images for a long time could negatively affect the development of their eyes," Nintendo said.

The new-generation DS console -- which enables users to play 3D games without special glasses -- missed the Christmas season but will be released on February 26 in Japan and in March in the United States, Europe and Australia.

Nintendo is to hold an admission-free three-day event in Chiba, east of Tokyo, from January 8 to let gamers try the new console ahead of its launch.

The Kyoto-based company issued the caution in a message posted on its website to those who plan to try the 3DS.

Nintendo noted that experts say 3D images -- not only those of the Nintendo 3DS but also those in cinemas and



Nintendo has issued a health warning over the 3D function on its upcoming gaming console, recommending children aged six and under do not play with it to prevent damage to their eyes.

on television -- could affect the development of vision in small children.

The gaming gadget features the trademark DS dual screens, with the upper screen providing 3D images and the other controlled by touch with a stylus.

The illusion of depth can be increased or decreased so that games can be played in both 2D and 3D.

Nintendo called for use of the console's "parental control" function so that children aged six and below play only in 2D, and it noted that some people feel more tired when playing 3D games than 2D versions. □

Health Tip: Help Ease Morning Sickness

Nausea and vomiting are common among pregnant women. Although these symptoms often are dubbed morning sickness, they can last all day.

The American Academy of Family Physicians offers these suggestions to help alleviate morning sickness:

Prepare several small meals during the day to prevent getting too hungry or too full.

Stick to bland and lighter foods, rather than those high in fat, grease, or spices.

Don't eat anything with a smell that bothers you or makes you feel nauseous.

Choose carbohydrates such as white rice or a plain baked potato.

Keep some saltine crackers next to your bed, and munch on a few before you rise from bed each morning.

Consider wearing acupressure wrist bands, used by some people to prevent sea sickness.

Some women are bothered by iron in their prenatal vitamins. If this includes you, speak to your doctor. □

The hugely popular Nintendo DS has sold more than 130 million units worldwide and its new 3D feature has drawn keen interest from media and gamers.

Sony has released its PlayStation Move system, which enables users wearing special glasses to play 3D games using wand-shaped motion controllers.

In motion-sensing games, Nintendo's Wii has faced competition from Microsoft's Kinect for the Xbox 360 system, which lets players use body gestures and does not require handheld controllers. □

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Meet the Mice with Two Dads: A Reporter's Squeaky Lab Tour



The problem with the mice with two fathers is that they're distractingly adorable. Sure, they're a mean feat of genetic engineering and a possible first step on the long road toward gay couples creating biological children. But with their tiny bewiskered faces

and itty-bitty paws, it's hard to ignore: This is scientific progress at its cutest.

I came to this conclusion while holding one of the mice in a basement lab here at MD Anderson Cancer Center. The mice are a reproductive first: Instead of having

chromosomes from both a mother and a father, these critters get all of their DNA from two dads. Researchers led by MD Anderson geneticist Richard Behringer announced the existence of the mice Dec. 8 in the journal *Biology of Reproduction*. When I found out the babies were still alive and thriving, I knew I had to meet them.

Babies from two daddies Behringer, a soft-spoken man who seems to choose every word with care, was kind enough to let me do just that. We met in Behringer's eighth-floor office, which contains, among other things, a butterfly net and a copy of Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code." When I mentioned the latter, which was wedged between "Manipulating the

Mouse Embryo: A Laboratory Manual" and Lewis Thomas' "The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher," Behringer rolled his eyes.

"I couldn't put that stupid book down," he said.

It took Behringer and his team two years to see the mouse project through to completion. To coax viable baby mice from the genes of two males, the researchers engineered cells taken from male mice so they became stem cells that could then become any tissue. Those cells are called induced pluripotent stem cells, or iPS cells.

Because of natural genetic accidents, some of these male iPS cells lose their

Y chromosome, becoming XO cells with a single sex chromosome instead of the typical XY genotype.

The researchers then injected the stem cells into a regular mouse embryo, creating a sort of genetic hybrid, or chimera. The cells from the blastocysts would be normal, two-chromosomed XX cells. But the cells from the iPS injection would be single-chromosomed XO cells.

When the chimera mated with a regular male, some of their babies contained only genes from the regular male and the male iPS cells.

"It's a little twisty, because it is a female giving birth, and it is her eggs," Behringer said. "But genetically, it's his genome."

Brown and black mice

With the backstory explained, we headed downstairs to meet the mice. After a ride in a rodent-scented elevator (imagine the smell of a vet's office), it was off to the locker rooms, where one of Behringer's graduate students helped me suit up for my visit. No one goes into the live animal area without shoe-covering booties, a long yellow smock, gloves, a surgical cap and a face mask. The precautions aren't to protect humans, the grad student explained; they're to keep the mice safe from any bugs we might carry.

The mice reside in a room full of long metal shelves, all stacked with amber-colored

cages. Behringer selected two cages, which we took to a spare room next door for a closer look.

Even for a novice, it was easy to tell which mice had two fathers and which came from a more traditional parentage. That's because Behringer and his team used brown mice to create the male stem cells that contribute to the two-fathers' genome.

The normal embryo they injected those stem cells into came from a black mouse. So the babies genetically related to the embryo are black, while those genetically related to the stem cells are brown.

The daddy-only mice are completely normal, Behringer said. They certainly act no different from their black counterparts, sniffing around their cages and pulling themselves up the sides like they're doing chin-ups. I held one in my hand, and it sniffed my glove thoroughly before peering down at its cage mates with black, bulgy eyes. [Photo: Mouse with two daddies]

The research team produced 27 of the double-daddy mice, and Behringer said he'll likely mate some of them to demonstrate that they're fertile (there's no reason they shouldn't be, he said). He's now working to see if he can take stem cells that have lost their second sex chromosome (the X-only iPS cells used back in the beginning of the mouse experiment) and put a replacement chromosome back in.

In mice, offspring with just one X chromosome - an XO genotype, in other words - do just fine. In humans, most embryos with only one sex chromosome die. Those that do survive with an XO genotype have Turner syndrome. Women with Turner syndrome are infertile and may have other health problems.

If the transfer techniques work, scientists could start with male cells, turn them into XO stem cells, and then add in new X chromosomes, effectively turning a male body cell into a female stem cell. □

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Billy Taylor, ardent jazz promoter, dies at 89

Billy Taylor, an acclaimed jazz pianist and composer who became one of the genre's most ardent advocates through radio, television and the landmark Jazzmobile arts venture, has died at age 89. Taylor died Tuesday of a heart attack in Manhattan, said his wife, Theodora Taylor. "He enjoyed his life," she said. "Music was his love."

Though he had a noteworthy career as a musician and composer that spanned decades, and played with luminaries such as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis, Billy Taylor was probably best known as a

tireless jazz booster, educator and broadcaster.

Dr. Taylor, as he preferred to be called, was the first black to lead a television studio orchestra in the 1950s. He helped found Jazzmobile in the 1960s which began as mobile, outdoor concerts on a parade float to bring free music to inner city neighborhoods. He was host of a popular jazz show on National Public Radio from 1977 to 1982. And, in what he later called one of his more significant accomplishments, he profiled musicians for CBS' Sunday Morning show winning an Emmy Award in 1983 for a

piece on Quincy Jones.

Arnold J. Smith, a professor of jazz history at New Jersey City University and friend of Taylor's, said the pianist was "one of our best spokesmen ever in the history of this music. To the point that, it's my feeling and others, that he sacrificed his jazz piano playing for the cause of jazz." When asked by an interviewer in 2007 how he would talk to a jazz newbie, Taylor said it depended on the "quality of the music."

"When it's well played, there's not a lot you have to say, because if you play it right, then people get that melody, the rhythm, or whatever the aspect of the music is that is attractive to them," he said. "But one of the things that we have not done is to put jazz in the position that it deserves in our society."

For Taylor, jazz was a central musical form for telling the story of America.

"If you really listen to that, study that, everything you need to know about America is right there, and it's up to us who've experienced much of that to be able to share that," he continued.

William Taylor was born July 24, 1921, in Greenville, N.C., but he grew up mostly in Washington, D.C. After graduating from Virginia State College, where he studied sociology and music in the 1940s, he moved to New York City to forge a career as a jazz pianist. He lucked out, landing a gig playing with Ben Webster, Big Sid Catlett and Charlie Drayton opposite the Art Tatum Trio, he told an interviewer in 1994.

His went on to lead the Billy Taylor Trio, and composed



dozens of pieces for ensembles as well as more than 300 songs, including the popular "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free."

Besides his wife, he is survived by a daughter, Kim Taylor-Thompson, a law professor at New York University. A son, Duane, died in 1988. Funeral arrangements were pending. □

Moroccan writer Taia challenges homosexual taboo



Novelist Abdellah Taia, who has won acclaim in France and readers abroad, has challenged a taboo in his native Morocco and won't back down: he is the first writer to come out as gay in a country that bans homosexuality.

For 37-year-old Taia, who has lived in Paris for the last decade, being homosexual and Muslim are not mutually exclusive. He "feels Muslim" and is from a country where Islam is the state religion.

"I am the first Moroccan writer who has spoken openly about his homosexuality, to acknowledge it, but without turning my back on the country I'm from," he said.

"My homosexuality, I already felt it from the age of 13, at school."

"But despite this, I feel Muslim. There is no incompatibility between Islam and choices of sexual identity," he told AFP on a recent visit back to Morocco.

Taia, who writes in French and has been translated into Spanish and English, emerged from obscurity to make a splash on the French literary scene with novels such as the 2005 "Le Rouge du Tarbouche" (The Red of the Fez), an autobiographical account of his life in Paris, where he moved in 1999.

In November, he was awarded the prestigious 2010 Prix Flore for young authors.

A slim, softspoken man with a timid smile, the writer was born in a working-class neighbourhood in Sale, the Moroccan capital Rabat's twin city, into a childhood marked by deep poverty. □

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